Arts and Literacy: the Specific Contributions of Art to the Development of Multiliteracy

Jean-Charles Chabanne

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ABSTRACT

Deducing the forms of a work, situating it within its history, putting into words an aesthetic experience, proposing and confronting interpretations, even conceiving, producing and assessing a work of art within a creative process, comparing the artistic productions of one art to those of another, all mobilise the capabilities of reading, oral expression and writing, while also calling upon a demanding practice of both verbal language and other languages – graphical, sensitive, bodily – in complex activities of semiotic transposition. Thus, literacy (understood as the broad competence for thinking, learning and self-construction in the elaborate uses of every system of signs) is at the heart of the practices of art present not only in the specialised subject areas but also in the subject areas of language and the human sciences. Learners have to learn to talk and write about art in stimulating situations which are likely to offer students an original yet demanding way of developing their competences. This paper argues for the development of art related literacy practices at the end of compulsory education and analyses the French school system from this point of view.

Keywords: *art and literacy, writing and talking on art and literacy, art education, multiliteracy*

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Introduction

This article takes a cross-curricular approach to literacy. It is inscribed within an enlarged definition of *multiliteracy* (New London Group, 1996; Kalantzis, Cope, & Cloonan, 2010) so as to emphasise its multiple and integrating aspect vis-à-vis the definition of a core literacy, which CIDREE defines as follows: "*Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication*". The assumption I shall defend here is that literacy practices integrated within arts practices are specifically a part of this multiliteracy and that they provide a unique contribution to "21st century literacy skills". The first section of this contribution will survey the complexity of current definitions of (multi)literacy. However, it also emphasises that the heart of this multiliteracy is constituted by literacy-in-the-restricted-sense, a core literacy, based upon *natural language* as a fundamental tool, giving access to the "social brain" (Mercer, 2013). In the following section, I will show how multiliteracy and literacy-in-the-restricted-sense are called upon by the practice of arts, which, in turn, specifically enrich them. I intend to show that, when the practices of arts are deployed in all their potentialities without being ejected to the periphery of the school universe, they demandingly bring into play the fundamental competences in all the dimensions of literacies. Finally, I will refer to French upper secondary curricula to assess whether these potentialities are exploited and what perspectives might be opened that could concern other educational systems in Europe.

Paradoxically, although the integration of arts and cultural education into curricula has become an evidence, in France, from the pre-elementary level (ISCED 0) to the mid-secondary level (the French "collège", ISCED 3), it seems that on entering upper secondary education, artistic subjects disappear from the majority of curricula (except to some specialised ones) and thus the specific literacy practices associated with them also disappear.

Definition of multiliteracy

The concept of literacy has been used in major studies of comparative efficiency (PISA, PIRLS; OECD, 2014). In France, however, the concept is not easily grasped since it has no equivalent and its successive definitions have never been unanimously accepted[1] (Hébert & Lépine, 2012; Jaffré, 2004; Bautier, Crinonet et al., 2006; Bautier & Rayou, 2009). The search for a French language equivalent to "literacy" occupying the same central position in political discourse and research is doomed to failure. The nearest concept in this role is perhaps "*maîtrise de la langue*" (mastery of language) which, in spite of the misunderstandings which it can create (Nonnon, 2008), seems to be functionally the closest (Eduscol, 2008). Here is the most recent formulation to be found in the core curriculum for compulsory schooling ("Socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture", French National Core Curriculum, Knowledge, Competences and Culture Core Standards):

> "The domain of languages for thinking and communicating covers four types of language, which are both objects of knowledge and tools: the French language; foreign or regional modern languages; scientific languages; and the languages of the arts and

[1] No more so than its spelling, which fluctuates between *literacy, littéracie* and *littératie*.

> the body. This domain determines access to other knowledge and a balanced culture; it implies the mastery of codes, rules, systems of signs, and representations. It brings into play knowledge and competences which are called upon as tools of thought, communication, expression and work, and which are used in all areas of knowledge and in most activities. The acquisition and mastery of each of these languages cannot be compensated for by the acquisition and mastery of another." (CSP, 2015)

If we compare this with the definition of literacy of the NCTE and that of CIDREE, we can measure the extent to which the Anglo-Saxon definition has evolved towards an even greater extension in passing from the singular to the indefinite plural:

> "Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st century demands that **a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competences, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic, and malleable**. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups. Active, successful participants in this 21st century global society must be able to:
>
> - Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology;
> - Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so as to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;
> - Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
> - Manage, analyse, and synthesise multiple streams of simultaneous information;
> - Create, critique, analyse, and evaluate multimedia texts;
> - Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments." (NCTE, 2008)

In what follows, I will examine the elements of this definition in the light of the question: To what extent do the arts (as both practice and teaching) specifically contribute to the acquisition of literacy skills at the upper secondary level?

Literacy-in-the-restricted-sense

Historically, the first definition of literacy, what I call *verbal literacy,* or *literacy-in-the-restricted-sense*, designates elementary competences linked to the mother tongue: speaking, reading, and writing. This is the definition of the field of research devoted to mother tongues, in which "literacy" is practically always equivalent to "verbal/printed literacy" (IAIMTE, 2015).

This restricted definition remains fundamental to us. *Verbal literacy* still constitutes the very heart of the more extensive definitions which have succeeded it, as well as remaining fundamental whenever one looks into not only literacy as the result of acquisition process but also into its mere *process of transmission and acquisition*. The extension and complexification of the definition of literacy/literacies should not obliterate the crucial idea that any form of literacy necessarily integrates literacy-in-the-restricted-sense as a fundamental language competency (Grossman, 1999).

Socio-cognitive approaches to language activity

Human speech is indeed the tool which is most present in every learning process in both the school framework and in informal education (Bernié & Brossard, 2013; Daniels, 2001; Brossard & Fijalkow, 2008; Brossard, 2005; Bronckart, 1997; Clot, 1999). Even if learning mobilises other semiotic modalities (for example in areas such as *studio art* or physical education), natural language remains the mediator tool of learning (Mercer, 2013) : "Knowing how to speak, read and write French conditions access to every area of knowledge and the acquisition of every competency" (Eduscol, 2015).

Not only is natural language the universal translator which at least enables knowledge, including non-verbal knowledge, to be put into words, but it is also indispensable for creating learning contexts, scaffolding (as defined by Bruner, Wood et al., 1976) learning activities, designing as well as conceiving, negotiating, regulating and assessing situations favourable to learning (Sensevy, 2011; Sensevy et al., 2005). "21st century skills" is generally used to refer to certain "core skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, digital literacy" (CIDREE, 2015). All these *core* competences are themselves based upon a *root* competence: the ability to make diversified use of natural language for thinking, problem-solving, inventing, co-acting (collaborating and com-municating). All these literacy activities, to which I will return later, are carried out in a context which is fundamentally verbal. This explains the importance which NCTE grants to *extended* verbal literacy: "Communication in mother tongue (reading, writing, speaking, understanding, critical thinking)" (NCTE, 2008).

This is merely a reminder of the contributions of the *socio-cultural theory of education and cognitive development*, for which Mercer (2013), developing the work of Vygotsky [2012] coined the metaphor of the "social brain". The main thesis of this research field can be formulated as follows: language is not simply a medium through which thought is "expressed"; it is the very means of cognitive activity (Jones, 2008). We think because we produce signs which enable us to recover and re-launch our own thinking, in a continuous movement. This model articulates the social domain with cognitive constructivism insofar as it insists on the fact that, before being interiorised and individualised, thinking is shared in discursive dynamics (Wertsch, 1979). We think **together** and this is how we learn to think individually, through the permanent exchange of signs. See also the concept of "social semantics" as a constitutive concept in multiliteracy (Hodge & Kress, 1988).

These principles have a direct application if we take formal education into account. If indeed language is a tool for cognition, it is, of course, also the main instrument of the teacher: numerous studies analyse the work of the teacher as language action (Barnes, 2008). *Making pupils speak (or write) so that they learn* is a fundamental professional expertise.

Symmetrically and inseparably, however, the work of the teacher produces better learning effects if it does not limit itself to being projected towards the pupils as in frontal transmission teaching. Learning implies that pupils rework the teacher's language and the language of knowledge, that the *supplied* language is progressively replaced by *reworded* language (Rabatel, 2010). One does not learn because one listens and repeats, no more so than because one imitates model behaviours. One learns because one speaks and writes, and more broadly because one *produces signs in situated learning interaction*.

Verbal language and other languages in the ordinary practices of art

What links are there between the practices of art and literacy? To answer this question in a school context, I shall begin by leaving the school world so as to observe the place occupied by literacy (in both the restricted and broader senses) in the "reference social practices" (Martinand, 1981) which can be observed in the *worlds of art* (Danto, 1964; Becker, 1988). Let's ask a simple question: Who speaks or writes around works of art? Before this, however, let's clarify three possible misunderstandings. First restriction: here I will not deal with the *language arts* (literature, poetry, etc.) or the *representation of the language arts in other arts*. Second restriction: I will not reduce literacy to its sole *verbal* modalities: "research into literacy education has tended to stem from west-centric views where literacy is often defined as reading and writing traditional forms of text and often measured through standardised tests." (Barton, 2013, p. 2). Amongst the multiple literacies postulated by the most recent definitions, the arts occupy a separate place which specifically pertains to research into "art literacy" in the domain of the teaching of art as such (Albers & Sanders, 2010; Barton, 2013): "these literacy skills relate to other extraneous ways of knowing, unique to the particular subject areas under investigation that must also be learnt..." (Barton, 2013, p. 6) Third restriction: it is completely outside my intent to wish to instrumentalise art in schools, so that it might serve a single finality, that of developing *only* basic literacy skills (Barton, 2013). The authority of Dewey (1934) and Goodman (1984) should suffice to remind us that art does not have to justify itself in the global educational project of our modern societies, of which it constitutes an essential dimension (Kerlan, 2007, 2008). Here, I look into a simple idea: in practising *arts for themselves* we can develop transferable literacy skills. In other words, if the practices of art are to develop multiliteracy, this is precisely because they are not subjected to this sole objective.

Art in ordinary settings

If we examine from the ethnologist's perspective the social practices which the actors themselves call "artistic", we can observe multiple verbal exchanges or, more exactly, multimodal interactions (Duncum, 2004; Rabatel, 2010) which interweave enunciations in natural language and complex and mobile sets of other signs: para-verbal (exclamations, intonation, inflexions), non-verbal signs (mimics, gestures, postures, movements) (Kerbrat-Orechioni, 1990, 1992, 1993) as well as the use of various artefacts (notes, schemas, sketches: "*instrumented cognition*") (Rabardel, 1995; Vérillon & Rabardel, 1995). The complexity of these semiotic phenomena corresponds to the complex definition of "multiliteracy" (Kress, 2003; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leuween, 2001).

Analysing the forms of an artwork, situating it within its history, putting into words one's aesthetic experience, proposing and confronting interpretations, even conceiving, producing and assessing a work of art within a creative process, comparing the artistic productions of one art to those of another – all these mobilise reading, oral and writing skills while also calling upon a demanding and intricate practice of both verbal language

and other languages – graphic, sensitive, bodily – through complex activities of semiotic transposition (Müller et al., 2013; Mondada, 2013):

– Around the material production of artworks (*poiesis*): discourse of the artist (Corbel, 2012; Dessons, 1994), preceding, accompanying or prolonging creation (Villagordo, 2012; Ernst, 1994; Stiles & Selz, 1996; Passeron, 1996)

– Around the interpretation of artworks: art historians (Baxandall, 1979; Zerner, 1997; Barolsky et al., 1996), iconologists, art philosophers, aestheticians;

– Around mediation: museum guides, teachers (Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002);

– Around the aesthetic experience of artworks: discourse of the "art critic" (Brunot, 1930; Frangne & Poinsot, 2001; Carrier, 1987; Gaulmier, 1983; Schefer, 2007); discourse of "enlightened art-lovers" or "connoisseurs"; and "writings on art" in the literary tradition stemming from Diderot and Baudelaire (Vaugeois, 2005; Dethurens, 2009);

– Around artworks as material objects: art merchants, gallery owners, exhibition organisers (Docquiert, 2011), stage designers, museum curators, restorers, art experts, buyers and collectors (Graham, 2010).

Few of these practices are transposed into upper secondary education. In France, talking-about-art is exclusively practised in certain specialised options which concern a very limited number of pupils: Music, Dance, Art History and Visual Arts (MEN, 2001). The only forms practised by all pupils concern literature in the final examinations in French (Pratiques 68, 1990; Jey, 1998). In the final analysis, most practices of talking-about-art from outside the school universe are excluded from this universe, particularly those pertaining to the expression of a sensitive reception or a spontaneous appreciation, the voices of professional "spectators", critics, journalists and enlightened art-lovers.

Art outside the legitimised forms?

If we consider that talking-about-art does not only exist in expert and normed forms, we can go even further. The ethnologists and sociologists of art take seriously the words of the profane, such as museum visitors, pupils, the ordinary man in the street… and have identified multiple forms of talking and writing about art which could be called "informal" and/or "ordinary" (Le Quéau, 2007; Heinich, 2004).

Talking-about-art is thus not reserved for scholarly practices: it is also present in discussions between friends about the choice of a film, the comparison of the qualities of musicians or singers, the choice of clothing or accessories. The extension of the concept of aesthetic experience (Dickie, 1964; Beardlsey, 1988; Zangwill, 2011; Chateau, 2010), of aesthetic pleasure (Vouilloux, 2011), of aesthetic appreciation and of aesthetic judgement (Schaeffer, 1996, 2015) fuels contemporary debates about the re-readings of Kant (Genette, 1994, 1997) even about the return of a metaphysical ontology of the Beautiful (Zemach, 1997; Réhault, 2013). In profane guise, one can find the same fundamental questions of the theories and specialists of art: What is art? What is Beauty and what criteria to use to decide? What is its purpose? How much is it worth? Who decides if this is beautiful or ugly? (Morizot, 1998). These debates also concern school (Montandon & Perez-Roux, 2014).

The sociology of education and the sociology of learning (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bernstein, 1975; Lahire, 1995) denounce invisible phenomena of misunderstanding which

can explain school failure: the relationship to art is one such phenomenon just as much as the socially constructed "relationship to school" and "relationship to knowledge" ("rapport à l'école", "rapport au savoir", Bautier & Rochex, 1998).

Reference to the ordinary practices of art challenges the reductive prejudices concerning art

How does this detour via discourse on art, which is neither expert, nor formalised, nor given value, contribute to our reflection on teaching multiliteracy by means of the arts in upper secondary education?

First, secondary education privileges the "legitimised arts" while ignoring the forms of art and discourse which are those of the pupils. Nevertheless, in France, the official documents define what art is, using an inclusive definition even if this open definition has been challenged (for example: Fumaroli, 2007). In 2008, the French Ministry for Education introduced the teaching of history of arts (the plural is important: not "art history", but "history of arts") in compulsory education (that is, starting from early childhood education from age 3 to lower secondary education until age 16) (MEN, 2008; Baldner & Barbaza, 2013). The list of "arts" recognised goes far beyond the list of legitimised arts and includes forms of popular art: "visual arts" integrate not only the traditional plastic arts but also photography, illustration and cartoon; "arts of space" associate architecture with urbanism and the art of gardens and landscapes; "sonic arts" put on an equal footing on vocal and instrumental music, film music and "present day" popular music; the "performing arts" do the same for drama, dance, mime, circus arts, street arts, puppet theatre and even equestrian arts, fireworks and fountains (MEN, 2008).

This perspective, which upsets the implicit tenets of arts education in France in turn challenges the bashfulness of the upper secondary (the French "lycée") curriculum with its extremely cautious opening to this inclusive vision, a vision which has the advantage of *creating a link between the practices that pupils from every milieu recognise as theirs and the practices recognised as legitimised*. Yet it is precisely during upper secondary education that the arts (at least music and the visual arts) disappear from the list of subjects, except in arts specialised curricula concerning very few upper secondary students. The opportunity of linking informal, personal literacy practices and formal, school literacy practices disappears. Pupils are invited to adopt expert practices *as receivers only*; they are required to be historians of literature or semiologists (Todorov, 2007; Langlade, 2004; Breyer, 2004; Citton, 2010, 2007)

Motivating and demanding literacy practices

There is a whole body of research dealing with the positive effects of arts teaching on literacy-in-the-restricted-sense. Barton (2013) has surveyed this literature. The promoters of integrating arts teaching into curricula and practices stress this important dimension (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007). However, most of this literature is devoted to primary education in which the teacher is a multi-subject teacher.

Since this is true for primary and mid-secondary levels, should it not also be true for the upper secondary level? It is important to change the conceptions held by pupils, teachers and parents regarding artistic subjects, the usefulness of which concerning fundamental school learning is sometimes challenged (Deasy, 2002). Not only do artistic and cultural practices constitute an essential dimension of curricula given their specific contribution to art literacy, but they are also essential for the construction of multiliteracy, since they call upon skills at the intersection of experiences and languages (verbal, bodily, iconic, acoustic, graphic).

The close link between "artistic practices" and "literacy practices" should be analysed in detail. I use the term "practices" and not just "teaching", for these practices go far beyond the formal teaching which takes place in dedicated lessons (music, visual arts, dance, art history, lessons in aesthetics). In fact, pupils enter into contact with the arts in multiple but *isolated* worlds, and the task of education is to *establish links* between these experiences and to *validate* them as socially recognised *knowledge*. Pupils all have a personal practice of the arts, at least a reception practice of the popular art forms. They sometimes have a production practice (dance, music, writing) (Penloup, 1999). Usually, they work with works used as pedagogical material in their classes (mainly for the study of literature, philosophy and history).

Interpersonal experiential mediation

The most frequent literacy practices are what sociologists call *mediation process* (Heinich, 2009) which is none other than a joint activity in front of an artwork: co-perceiving, co-feeling, co-interpreting, co-analysing, and of course co-producing, co-creating. This is obviously central in dissymmetrical interactions such as the teacher-student relationship in a class, or the guide-visitor relationship at an exhibition. However, this *co-experience* of art (in the extended sense of Dewey, 1934 and 1938) is also constitutive of ordinary, informal practices amongst peers: two friends listening to the same piece of rap with shared earphones and talking about it are fully engaged in a co-experience of art which can easily be seen as co-talking-about-art (Rickenmann et al., 2009).

For my part, this is how I interpret the notions of "communication and collaboration" included in the definition of literacy of CIDREE, defining the *social and ethical dimension* of multiliteracy which could be called the *literacy of sociality* (learning to live together, and to begin to feel together, or even to care): "21st century skills" is generally used to refer to certain core competences such as critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, *communication and collaboration* [emphasis added], digital literacy" (CIDREE, 2015). Notions which are also found in the NCTE definition: "Build intentional *cross-cultural connections and relationships with others* [emphasis added]" (NCTE, 2008).

Here, I must recall that, in this approach, language is not conceived as a technical medium but as the very material for effecting these "connections and relationships" or this "information sharing": this is not a mere exchange of content, but, strictly speaking, a *collaborative action* through which subjects mutually construct each other in exact proportion to their material and symbolic co-operation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The sensitive component

I shall pursue the deployment of the concept of multiliteracy by broaching one of the facets which its definitions do not sufficiently highlight. The cognitive psychology of perception (Arnheim, 2004) remind us that all the sensorial modalities of the various arts (sight, hearing, touch) do not pertain solely to low level neuronal treatment. A perception is an experience which is in equal measure both cognitive and bodily; it is a complex perceptive-affective-cognitive knot to which the definitions of *literacy* refer: "Manage, analyse, and synthesise *multiple streams of simultaneous information* [emphasis added]" (NCTE, 2008).

Indeed, these "multiple streams of simultaneous information" should not be reduced to "multimedia texts" and other messages. For the anthropological function of art is to apprehend, express, interpret and share the *striking experiences of our lives* which constitute *fundamental human problems* which must be "resolved" (Citton, 2010, 2012; Laplantine, 2005; Petit, 2002).

By means of this particular angle, we return to the CIDREE definition of literacy: literacy competences concerning "critical thinking and problem-solving" do not only concern operations of thought dealing with concepts or abstract and rational reasoning but also more global experiences which are *crucial moments of life for the individual*. Even in the most ordinary of lives, far-removed from the restricted practices of art in Bernstein's sense, these events are legion: a person may be moved by a song, a tragic news story, a final in his favourite sport, a landscape encountered on holiday, a reality TV or talent show (Holmes, 2010).

To put it briefly: multiliteracy as defined today must necessarily integrate a *sensitive dimension*. Amongst the multiple literacies we must also identify a sensitive literacy or *aesthetic literacy* after Dewey, a competency in signifying (making signs of) our sensitivity, our capacity for openness (Raney, 1999) to sensitive experiences. This goes far beyond a mere education in perceptual literacy (Cerkez, 2014), since this is a social reconstruction of perception, and appreciation which is undoubtedly the central contribution of education through art (Flood et al., 2007, 2008; Narey, 2008). "Literacy is not simply a separation of language systems that can be tested or skilled to death. It is not, nor can it be, enacted by simply adding on another communicative mode to traditional print literacy and calling it "multimodal." Literacy is entangled, unable and unwilling to be separated from the other modes, media, and language systems that constitute the very messages that are sent, read, and/or interpreted. (…) Multimodal literacies research considers the multifaceted ways in which languages (art, drama, music, movement, written/oral, math) can be studied in school contexts" (Albers & Sanders, 2010, p. 4).

Symmetrically, from the perspective of the socio-cultural theory of education (Mercer, 2013), when talking or writing about works of art (restricted or enlarged culture, Bernstein, 1975), one calls upon verbal literacies in a particularly demanding way: perceptual and experiential. Living, perceiving, feeling, sharing salient aesthetic experiences, even in ordinary and trivial settings *requires finding the words (or alternative signs) to say so*. This dimension is perfectly compatible with an education in well-equipped, active critical thinking: sensitive literacy is a sensitivity which is not only passive but also active ("manage, analyse and synthesise"), multidimensional ("simultaneous information") and "critical" ("analyse […] and evaluate") in the sense that it is capable of closely examining the raw

data of aesthetic experience in order to distance them. Amongst 21st century skills critical thinking also has a dimension of critical perceiving and critical sensibility, which consists in having learnt how to undo the masks of emotion, how to foil the manipulations of the effects (for example, the manipulations of advertising discourse or religious or political propaganda).

Multiliteracy and art literacy in the French upper secondary curricula

Despite their educational importance, their multiform presence in informal practices, and the motivation they can produce in support of cultural, social and school learning, it must be admitted that the artistic dimensions of multiliteracy are marginalised in French upper secondary curricula.

So, the fundamental French official documents, the Socle Commun de Connaissances, de Compétences et de Culture (Core curriculum of knowledge, competencies and culture, MEN, 2006 and 2014) and the History of Arts curriculum (MEN, 2008) call for the finding of a balance between a *sensitive approach* and a *technical approach*. The National French Core Curriculum 2015 quotes: "The pupil *will express in writing or orally what he feels before a literary or artistic work*, he will support his judgement with it, formulate his hypotheses on its significations and propose an interpretation [of the work] based notably upon its formal and aesthetic aspects" (CSP, 2015, p. 15) History of Arts curriculum 2008 quotes : "The objectives of the teaching of history of arts are [...] to enable [pupils] to progressively access the level of "conoisseurship" relevantly employing an initial sensitive and technical vocabulary" (MEN, 2008, p. 3). And the most recent official Roadmap to Art Education co-signed by the French Ministry of Education and French Ministry of Culture quotes : "The teaching of the arts includes a cultural dimension which [...] is essentially based upon the approach to artworks and movements, as well as the writings of artists, theoretical texts and technical documents. As often as possible, it is *lively: direct and sensitive* in a first phase; then reflexive and 'scholarly'" (MEN, 2015).

This undoubtedly requires an invitation to use *innovative literacy practices*, breaking with the habitual school forms, which may directly and massively call upon the autonomy and creativity of pupils while inviting them to *create the links* between their own personal culture and school culture by employing the multiple modalities which current digital instruments make available to all. The aim is to make room for *projects* adopting in collaborative forms pupils' experiences in the domain of the arts.

It should also be noted that these forms of work are of such a nature as to re-inject commitment into the common activities of pupils who are at unequal levels of competence; this pertains to another principle contained in the definitions of multiliteracy which I have developed from the outset: the principle of differentiation (CIDREE, 2015).

Multiple attempts have been made to introduce these forms of innovation pertaining to the principles of project-based instruction: we could mention, for example, the Pluri-disciplinary Professional Projects of French vocational high schools (Eduscol, 2000), the Supervised Personal Projects (acronym: TPE; Eduscol, 2005), the Discovery Itineraries in lower secondary education, or the ECJS subject (civic, social and judicial education) (Eduscol,

2014). The French Ministry for Education has very recently proposed the introduction into lower secondary education of Interdisciplinary Practical Teaching (acronym: EPI; Eduscol, 2015). All these measures are based on the same principles: a project chosen and borne by the pupils mobilising several subjects, which is given concrete form in a pluri-semiotic – generally digital – production and which constitutes a duly assessed pluri-disciplinary context for learning.

Essentially and quite simply, the aim is to *put the pupils to work* in a demanding literacy activity: pupils who produce are not only pupil expressing themselves and diffusing information: they are, first and foremost, *pupils who are talking-and-writing-to-learn*.

Conclusion

To conclude, we must resolutely keep in mind that the contribution of pedagogy of multiliteracy does not target the mastery of technical tools. Its main objective is to obtain *pupil investment in tasks*, the condition for success.

> "Multimodal literacies instruction is pedagogy with *a fundamental philosophical orientation* that holds that children (and adults) learn best when *engaged* in complex, socially constructed, personally relevant, creative composition and interpretation of texts that incorporate a variety of meaningful communicative modes or symbol systems." (Albers & Sanders, 2010, p. 4)

One of the conditions of pupil engagement is also the taking into account of the distances and misunderstandings of socio-cultural origin which result in the fact that for certain pupils there is an irremediable distance between the school world and its knowledge and their own world, values, commitments and the social determinants of their dispositions and empowerment.

This is a major stake for upper secondary education. However, it should not be forgotten that the increase in the flow towards higher education also makes it a challenge for university pedagogy as it is also a major concern for all cultural institutions (art museums, science museums), which must adapt their provision to new audiences. For all these stakeholders, this is not a lowering of demands but a need to update mediation processes: not how to simplify and reduce content and instructional objectives, but how to give place for intermediation.

This challenge is for our societies in their entirety. This underlines the fact that the final contribution, perhaps the most central and most fundamental contribution of an education in multiliteracy, resides in its ethical foundations. The arts belong to the *transmission of the fundamentals of any society* in forms ever open to interpretation and democratic debate, in order to "attend to the ***ethical responsibilities*** required by [our] complex environments" (NCTE, 2008).

The essential aim targeted by an education in true multiliteracy is not only to master technical competencies, no matter how seductive and spectacular they may be, but also and above all to serve living-together and care and to build a society which is both peaceful and cohesive.

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